

**LODI CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
SALEM METHODIST CHURCH, 345 E. ELM STREET, LODI
THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2000**

A. ROLL CALL

The Special City Council meeting of Thursday, August 24, 2000 was called to order by Mayor Mann at 7:08 p.m. at the Salem Methodist Church, 345 E. Elm Street, Lodi.

Present: Council Members – Hitchcock, Land, Nakanishi (arrived at 8:20 p.m.), Pennino (arrived at 7:15 p.m.), and Mayor Mann

Absent: Council Members – None

Also Present: City Manager Flynn, City Attorney Hays, and City Clerk Blackston

B. TOPIC

Agenda item B entitled, "Tour of east side neighborhoods and discussion of City's new program, "Building HOPE (Housing, Opportunities, Pride and Education) in Lodi".

The meeting began with a guided bus tour to the following locations:

- 217 E. Lockeford Street
- Rush Street
- 300 – 400 Blocks of E. Locust Street
- 306 E. Pine Street
- 220 – 222 E. Pine
- 300 – 400 Blocks of E. Lodi Avenue
- 500 Block of Hilborn
- 329 ½ Hilborn Street
- 300 Block of Flora Street
- 328 ½ Flora Street
- 418 ½ Eden Street
- Garfield Street, South of Tokay Street
- Lodi House, located at 801 S. Washington Street
- Priebe Street
- Cherry Street
- Maple Street
- Redwood Street

The Council reconvened at Salem Methodist Church at 8:23 p.m. – All present.

Mayor Mann extended his appreciation to City staff for providing the tour and thanked the public for their interest.

Community Development Director Bartlam provided a map (filed) of the City of Lodi Redevelopment Project Area (RPA) and introduced the speakers.

Ann Larson, President of the East Side Improvement Committee, thanked JoAnne Mounce for her efforts regarding the committee and introduced members of the committee who were present. She stated that there is a Citywide cleanup scheduled for September 23, 2000 and would like to see more participation and assistance from Central Valley Waste Services (CVWS).

Ms. Larson asked that Council consider making the east side a priority to receive adequate street lighting. She further stated that the committee is working with the Streets Division of Public Works to establish an Adopt-A-Street program in the area, and that this summer's Concert in the Park series has been very successful and well attended. Ms. Larson asked that Council consider increasing the staff of the Community Improvement Division to assist with handling of complaints and code enforcement. Lastly, Ms. Larson commented on a recent negative article in the local

newspaper which referred to a home for sale as a "lovely little home on Lodi's livable west side", which she felt depicts the negative attitude of the east side.

Community Improvement Manager Wood reported that he is responsible for administering the code enforcement functions for the City, and provided a basic description of code enforcement principals. He further stated that although they would like to be proactive, the lack of time and resources dictates that the Community Improvement Division operate on a reactive, complaint-generated basis. He commended Code Enforcement Officer Robert Holdsworth and Secretary Susan Schwippert who work in the office while he covers the administrative functions for approximately 600 cases. About 50% of the cases are regarding substandard housing which requires thorough inspections; 30% are nuisance cases regarding unsightly blight such as junk, debris and graffiti (which is handled by Public Works); 10% are zoning enforcement complaints; and 10% are miscellaneous and municipal code enforcement issues.

Mr. Wood stated his department's policy is to operate in a fair manner, and to avoid heavy-handed tactics whenever possible -- using communication as a tool in working toward compliance; however, instances do exist where non-compliance fees or citations are required to bring more difficult violations into compliance. Mr. Wood noted that recently he and his staff spent almost nine months on a case involving lunch wagon food preparation taking place in a residential area, causing a health hazard to the public. That action continued to take place during the entire nine month investigation through to the court appearance process. Mr. Wood noted that he is very appreciative of the cooperative efforts of the Police Department, Public Works Department, and members of the East Side Improvement Committee.

Mr. Bartlam stated that RPA funds could be utilized on the east side for the purposes of property maintenance, improvements and reconstruction. This could assist with adding sidewalks, improving the water and sewer systems, and providing low interest loans for home construction and first-time buyers. There is a new program available to first time homebuyers eligible for conventional financing who cannot afford the down payment. The program currently has a waiting list. Mr. Bartlam stated that there are 1,100 acres of residential, commercial and light industrial within the east side, and that many of the homes on the east side need attention and repair. Mr. Bartlam stated that over the next 20 to 30 years potential funding of \$15 – \$20 million could be targeted to the east side for basic structural improvements and housing needs, and stated that his staff will present a preliminary plan regarding this at a future meeting.

Bobbie Fasano, Deputy Director of CalWorks, San Joaquin Human Services Agency, reported that CalWorks is a Welfare to Work Program administered in the county to establish flexible and creative programs in order to provide job training and assistance with the end result being departure from the welfare system. She reported that over the last three years welfare has declined by over 6,000 cases. There are 847 cases in Lodi of individuals who receive assistance. Through the "Building HOPE in Lodi" program, classroom and on-the-job training for approximately 6-10 individuals at a time would total about 2,080 hours of instruction in construction, plumbing and other related trades, along with soft skills and practical tips for seeking and retaining permanent employment. Participants would be paid minimum wage and would additionally be offered an opportunity to receive their GED Certificate through the efforts of the Lodi Adult School. Students would receive additional assistance in problem solving, childcare provisions, work clothes and transportation needs. Ms. Fasano stated she was very impressed with the City staff and their willingness to negotiate and be flexible through the process of providing government-assisted programs. She believes the program would combine two very important needs of the Lodi community, to repair and improve the east side, and to provide job training to ease the burden of our welfare system. At the request of Council she will provide countywide budget documents regarding the welfare system and the CalWorks program.

Janet Hamilton, Management Analyst in Administration, stated there have been many projects to improve the east side area, such as: the newly opened Lodi House, the after school program at Heritage School, the Community Service Agency, and the possible establishment of an indoor sports facility near the existing Parks and Recreation Annex. Ms. Hamilton announced that a family-oriented, multi-cultural health and safety fair, including businesses, churches, and several other organizations, will be held on Sunday, October 15 to encourage community involvement and outreach.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

1. Russ J. Valenti, Executive Director of Affordable Renovated California Housing, Inc., Danville, reported that he is currently performing a housing renovation at 513 E. Locust Street. He stated he is very appreciative of the Community Development Department's efforts to work with him on the proper inspections and permits, and stated they have made it much easier for him compared to other communities in which he has worked.
2. JoAnne Mounce, 437 E. Elm Street, Lodi, thanked City Manager Flynn for responding to her concerns and arranging this vital gathering to address the overwhelming code enforcement backlog and the need to take aggressive action toward making the east side cleaner and safer for its residents and children. She stated that many residents are forced to live in homes with peeling paint, boarded windows, bugs and vermin, and she feels shame in how this has effected our valued senior citizens who work all their lives for a lovely home only to be made prisoners by experiencing a lessened quality of life due to gang problems and irresponsible neighbors. Ms. Mounce asked that Council consider providing Mr. Wood with two additional full time Code Enforcement Officers. She noted that most communities provide one code enforcement officer per 15,000 – 20,000 citizens, yet at a population of 57,000, Lodi only has one officer and one manager struggling to maintain a reactive program. Ms. Mounce submitted photos (filed) of blighted housing conditions.
3. Jane Lea, 1931 Holly Drive, Lodi, suggested a possible solution to the problem of code enforcement might be in placing it under the realm of the Police Chief and utilizing the Police Partners to address these issues and staffing concerns. Ms. Lea also recommended a low interest loan program for east side property owners to renovate their homes.
4. Dorothy Connelly, 534 ½ E. Elm Street, Lodi, stated she is very frightened and concerned for her safety in dealing with a large group of Spanish-speaking people who live near her residence. She stated they are a constant source of noise and harassment, and have tagged a wall of her home with a gang sign and threw garbage over the fence into her yard. Mayor Mann requested that staff contact Ms. Connelly and look into her specific concerns as soon as possible.
5. Tony Canton, 1029 S. Church Street, Lodi, stated that he has approximately 56 units in the area which are well lit and well managed, but stated that overall there are many problems on the east side which seem to be worsening with time. He frequently has garbage dumped on his property which he must pay to dispose of. Mr. Canton shared that according to Mr. Wood, approximately two thirds of the 600 pending complaints regarding code enforcement are on the east side of town. He encouraged Council to move quickly to remedy this out of control situation and turn the code enforcement program into a proactive program.
6. Rick Woodward, 345 E. Pine Street, Lodi, a 35-year resident, stated he is disappointed at the disgraceful condition of this part of the Lodi community, and is concerned with the attention given toward new housing and improvements in other parts of Lodi while the east side continues to deteriorate. He asked that City staff and Council place immediate attention toward the traffic safety issue at the intersection of Central Avenue and Pine Street.
7. Dorothy Mehrer, 511 E. Locust Street, Lodi, stated she has watched her neighborhood deteriorate since the seniors who originally owned the properties have passed away and their children have sold or rented the homes. Now many single-family homes are multiple family homes or multiple units, and garages are rented as dwellings. She noted that the blight, junk cars and trash discussed this evening is in great part due to overpopulation of other cultures who have a different way of living. She stated she believes that cleanup will help with the problem, but that education and instilling a sense of pride within the east side residents is also necessary. Ms. Mehrer asked that Council address improving the

water pressure and sewer systems in the area. She thanked the City for the recent installation of a street light. Ms. Mehrer urged the Council to put more money into the tree trimming budget and to provide training to workers on the proper way to trim trees. She asked that the City stop trimming her trees at the beginning of August each year when she most needs the shade.

8. Eileen St. Yves, 310 S. Orange Avenue, Lodi, stated that most rental property owners do not know how to maintain and care for their property and acquire quality tenants. She offered assistance from the rental association she belongs to, to provide training to property owners on credit and background checks to insure better tenants. She also suggested going after property owners by creating a citation and fine process to back up City established policy.
9. Virginia Lahr, 311 E. Elm Street, Lodi, stated there is a need for more code enforcement officers, as they cannot keep up with the blight. She stated that the tire store at Pine and Stockton Streets is advertising car repair services on their lot, which has no space for such activity. She suggested the City deny multiple business license requests. Ms. Lahr asked that the City consider installing a traffic signal light or stop sign at the intersection of Pine Street and Central Avenue.
10. Virginia Snyder, 621 E. Lockeford Street #11, Lodi, commented that she appreciated the City's initiative in working with the CalWorks Program. She stated that for more than seven years the East Side Improvement Committee has been working toward trying to improve the area. Ms. Snyder suggested hiring five additional Code Enforcement Officers. She reported that in 1990 there were 18,000 residents in the east side, which represents approximately one third of Lodi's total population. She suggested that block grant funds be targeted for Mr. Wood's use in assisting owners/renters who wish to improve their property but are unable to afford supplies, permit fees and equipment. She also recommended that the City negotiate with CVWS to expand their spring-cleaning curbside pickup to include an additional service in the fall.
11. Ruth Jimenez, 621 Hale Road, Lodi, concurred with Eileen St. Yves' comments regarding educating property owners and tenants, but believes we also need to educate property managers on current codes, rights and responsibilities of tenants and owners. Ms. Jimenez stated she has had nothing but wonderful help from Mr. Wood, his staff, and the police in cleaning up properties, but there is much work to do in educating people. She stated a joint association of organized owners, managers and tenants could help the situation and provide a united form of assistance to the code enforcement efforts. Ms. Jimenez also asked that Council consider urging CVWS to provide literature regarding their trash and recycling programs in Spanish.
12. Pam Castro, 405 E. Elm Street, Lodi, stated that while she loves the area on the east side in which she is raising her two daughters, she is very concerned with living across the street from a complex where 15 men pile out of one van every evening and enter a single apartment dwelling where they all appear to reside. She urged the Council to take action quickly to assist the Code Enforcement division.
13. Police Captain Ron Tobeck stated that police are having a positive impact on calls of unlawful activity including evictions and narcotics violations. He echoed comments that absentee landlords are unavailable and do not have a vested interest in the community; however, the east side of Lodi overall receives the largest amount of attention and the most concentrated police patrol.
14. Street Superintendent George Bradley stated that over the past three years hundreds of trees have been planted on the east side and a newly revised tree trimming program has been instituted. Mr. Bradley also stated that his department is working to install new sidewalks in places where there are none, and to repair streets in the area, including the upcoming task of removing the railroad tracks from the center of Lodi Avenue. He stated that the Electric Utility Department is working hard to implement their five year plan for

street lighting throughout the City. Mr. Bradley reported that street sweeping is deterred by the amount of vehicles parked on the street.

15. Senior Civil Engineer Wes Fujitani stated that approximately 15-20 miles of water and sewer lines need to be replaced, and under the current budget plan it will take 50-60 years. He noted that possibly RPA funds could assist in replacing these lines in a more expedient manner.

Council Member Land outlined the positive impacts that have been made on the east side: 1) no new apartment buildings have been built in Lodi in 12 years, 2) the addition of alley lighting, 3) Cherokee Lane Revitalization, 4) completion of the Boys and Girls Club, 5) a new swimming pool, 6) \$600,000 improvements at Hale Park, 7) the proposed Parks and Recreation Indoor Sports Complex, 8) after school programs at Heritage and Lawrence Schools, 9) expediting permits for a charter school, 10) removal of the railroad tracks from Lodi Avenue, 11) establishment of the Lodi House, 12) creating the RPA, and 13) the new "Building HOPE in Lodi" program, which will assist first-time buyers in purchasing a home.

Mr. Land asked if the unused tennis courts at Hale Park could be better utilized in another fashion. Ms. Snyder addressed his question by stating the Police and Parks and Recreation Departments worked in conjunction with the East Side Improvement Committee to convert them to basketball courts through a joint funding effort, but the work was never done. Mr. Land requested that staff review the funding and report on the possibility of proceeding with the conversion to basketball courts in the near future.

Council Member Hitchcock agreed that cultural differences and safety issues are a problem and need to be addressed. She thanked everyone for coming and for voicing their opinions and concerns.

Council Member Pennino stated he is grateful for the active participation of all members of the East Side Improvement Committee, and thanked those in the audience for coming to share their concerns. Mr. Pennino asked that staff come back to Council in the near future with several proposals to address the following key issues:

- Can Partners handle arrangements for the towing of vehicles on streets, alleys and private property once they are properly marked?
- Can we post specific areas once a month to have cars move for street sweeping efforts?
- Conversion of tennis courts to basketball courts at Hale Park
- Can we use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to expedite repair and installation of sidewalks, and could we put a moratorium on funding other agencies until that project is completed?
- Would contracting out some of the electrical work expedite the Electric Utility Department's five year Street Light Installation Project?
- Is there something the Council could introduce (similar to the City of Stockton's Code Enforcement Ordinance) which would assist the Community Improvement Division in its efforts, by offsetting added staff costs with fees and fines to landowners for non-compliance?

Further, Mr. Pennino stated that as a matter of record, approximately 75% to 80% of landlords are local, not absentee.

Mayor Pro Tempore Nakanishi agreed that there is obviously a need for more code enforcement assistance in the City.

Mayor Mann stated the meeting was successful in that citizen input and Council response addressed a great deal of concerns and ideas for improving the quality of life in the area. He stated that the City may not be able to come up with an overnight fix-all solution, but it has made many efforts toward improvements, such as: the creation of the code enforcement program, addition of six patrol officers, creation of the street crimes unit and bicycle patrol units, as well as

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the street and alley lighting projects. Mr. Mann commended the East Side Improvement Committee for their unwavering mission to make a difference. He asked that staff bring a proposal for additional code enforcement position(s) before Council at the next regular meeting for discussion and consideration.

C. COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

D. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

ATTEST:

Susan J. Blackston
City Clerk